Human Resources and Democracy Division
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An Analysis of USAID Programs to Improve Equity in Malawi and Ghana's Education Systems

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Foreword

In the late 1980s, USAID's Africa Bureau mobilized to meet a congressional earmark for basic education. This earmark challenged the Bureau to develop African capacity to deliver, on a sustained basis, quality and equitable education to the majority of children in Africa. The earmark encouraged the Bureau to target countries without ongoing or previous USAID education programs. It also provided financial resources that allowed the Bureau to participate in reform on a larger scale than usual.

While all of the earmark programs aimed to tackle equity problems over a 10-year period, in the first five-year phase the Agency's energy was focused primarily on strengthening ministries of education. Thus, institution building for data collection and analysis and budgeting tended to take precedence over equity challenges.

These case studies analyze the Agency's exceptionally early efforts to address equity problems in Malawi and Ghana. Just as it would be a delicate matter to raise the issue of child neglect with a parent, the subject of equity proved to be a rather touchy subject for USAID to broach in both of these countries. The author followed this process as events unfolded. In these case studies, she captures USAID's experience, and shares insights concerning the following aspects of equity reform: 1) historical background; 2) political, policy, and education sector contexts; 3) program design; 4) program implementation; and 5) impact of equity efforts. Then, she closes with a comparative analysis of her two case studies.

Readers pressed for time or who are seeking an "executive summary" should turn to Chapter 3, which serves as a stand-alone summary of the findings of this study. Readers might also note the unusual layout of the paper. Rather than drawing boxes around text, which might give the mistaken impression that the material is paranthetical, peripheral, or case study summaries, the author has instead chosen to intersperse her analysis throughout the text, highlighting the discussion with a font change and a light-gray bar on the left-hand side of the column.

This analysis manifests USAID's will to understand what has and has not worked from our collective experience in managing the basic education earmark. We believe our efforts are leading towards achieving the goal of equitable education for all Africans.

—Julie Owen Rea
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—Joyce M. Wolf

Methodology

The current interest in investigating processes has frequently led to the use of case studies as a method for exploring how things happen. My experience in using a case study methodology in this exploration of USAID's attempts to influence the equity of the educational systems in a number of countries has made me aware of a number of decisions that must be made, consciously or unconsciously, in constructing a case study and of what the implications of those decisions are.

How much analysis should be included and where should it occur?

- The most common use of field data is as examples illustrating an analytical piece. As the examples are drawn from different cases, and no single case is completely followed, there is no sense of a "real" process. On the other hand, because the material is selected for the point that it will illustrate, the resulting study is succinct, and all of the points can be illustrated.

- On the other hand, the classical case study, according to the anthropological model, presents all of the observed data, the "story," first and then, layer by layer, undertakes a process of analysis. The process described is "real" and readers are allowed the opportunity to make their own analysis, an involvement that heightens learning. But the text is long, "unused" data is included, and readers accustomed to bullets and executive summaries are impatient to get to the analysis.

What focal length, which determines the scope of and amount of detail in what is portrayed, should be selected?

- The most common use of case studies involves a long distance view, generally a reconstruction of a historical process. The advantage lies in that the big issues can be addressed from this macro approach; the disadvantages lie in the lack of detail about how the process occurred, and the tendency of hindsight to create a logical sequence of events from what was in fact a far less ordered process.

- A short focal length requires a detailed description of all of the day-to-day steps in the process. While this approach might provide the best guidance for those attempting to duplicate the process or avoid the mistakes of the process, for others the amount of material presented is overwhelming.

Who should conduct the research?

- Studies conducted by a member of the community within which the process occurred have the advantage of the community member having tapped into the extensive knowledge about the context surrounding the events to which the research refers. On the other hand, the research will always contain a personal bias, and will generally lack an analytical framework that can be used to compare one case with another.

- An outside observer used to construct the case will be relatively more objective and can make use of a comparative framework in selecting and presenting data, but is less likely to know all of the contextual information necessary to interpret events correctly, and may not have access to all of the events involved in the process.

How specific should the account be in identifying who was involved and where the events occurred?

- It is customary to identify where and when the case occurred and to identify actual players in the process. This guarantees the "realness" of the events being described, but it also means that material may be excluded because it may be viewed as politically sensitive, unattractive, or negative. The degree to which the objections of the actors can become a factor varies according to the focus of the study. If the case is focused on the classroom, teachers and students generally do not have access to the study results and, therefore, relatively sensitive material can be described. If the case is focused on ministries and donor agencies, multiple perspectives on what is an acceptable interpretation of events will be encountered.

- Anthropological models always attempt to conceal the identity of the location and characters in their "stories," both to protect the individuals involved and to allow the researcher freedom to discuss sensitive material. However, the goals of anthropology are more abstract than those of the development field, where the identity of place may be crucial. An alternative model involves composite studies in which actual events from a variety of contexts are combined to create a case that touches on the most significant aspects of the process. The sense of "realness" is lost in such constructions, and the reader assumes that the constructor already knows the important characteristics of the process.

The following case studies reflect decisions made about each of the issues mentioned above. The research began as an investigation into the processes experienced by three USAID programs that were simultaneously attempting to address a range of different education-related equity issues. One case study was, however, eliminated due to the sensitivity of the data. The two remaining case studies are based on intermittent visits to the countries over a period of three years. This approach had the disadvantage of limited day-to-day familiarity with the specific programs and contexts, but the advantage of a comparative framework within which to examine the events. Information was collected through technical assistance activities, interviews with USAID and ministry of education personnel, interviews with regional and district personnel, and research visits to schools.

The findings are presented in the form of two chronological accounts, one from Ghana and one from Malawi. Each is frequently interrupted by analytical asides that comment on the unfolding events. The third section presents a comparative analysis of the two case studies. If all of the relevant contextual information had been included and all of the aspects of the circumstances analyzed, the resulting study would have been too lengthy for the amount of information it can contribute. Consequently, the focus of the story and analysis is on the process of USAID's attempts to support reforms in the equity of the educational systems of two countries, rather than on the specific reforms that were adopted.

The case studies that emerged from Ghana and Malawi offer insights into the processes of addressing policy changes through non-project assistance (NPA) and conditionality and into the nature of equity as an area of reform. The major themes that surfaced were: 1) the importance of the role that timing plays, such as within political transformations or within policy cycles, and (2) the importance of the specific issue being addressed, which affects the type and amount of donor and host country power that will be marshaled to support or resist it.

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EIP	Equity Improvement Program
GABLE	Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
GAC	Gender Appropriate Curriculum
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MCS	Ministry of Community Services
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
NPA	Non-Project Assistance
PAAD	Program Assistance Approval Document
PAIP	Program Assistance Initial Proposal
PREP	Primary Education Program
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Malawi

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The administrative division of Malawi into Northern, Central, and Southern Regions in 1921 tended to reinforce regional distinctions, such as the linguistic divisions that had been codified by missionaries. The economic character of each region was shaped during the colonial period: large tea and tobacco plantations were concentrated in the south; in the center, Malawians were mainly engaged in smallholder agriculture; and the north was heavily dependent on remittances from migrant workers in the South African mines. High standards of education were provided by the Free Church of Scotland at the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Region, an advantage that has persisted to the present. Because formal education in Malawi was established by missionaries whose ambition was to evangelize, education was considered unnecessary for women, who could not become preachers. The colonial government did little to change this attitude. Rather, it deliberately ignored women's education both for economic reasons and because it was felt that women's education would destabilize the traditional society (Whitehead, 1984). The educational inequities this system supported have also persisted to the present.

Malawi achieved independence from Britain in 1964, in what were considered auspicious circumstances. The extensive use of detention without trial by the colonial authorities had prevented the emergence of multiple political parties within the nationalist movement; unfortunately, it also modeled a style of governance soon to be emulated by the new regime. Within weeks of independence, Prime Minister Banda had dismissed his rivals from the cabinet and began a process of repression and stifling of any independent political activity. In 1966 Malawi was declared a one-party state, and by the early 1970s, Banda had total political control, dispensing patronage and selecting and dismissing members of parliament and ministers at will.

Banda's regime was remarkable for the extent of the personal control he exercised. His grip extended not only over the government and the economy of the country, but also over the moral standards under which the population lived. The strict puritan code that he so admired became the nation's way of life. For example: men were forbidden to wear long hair; women were forbidden to wear short skirts or trousers; films, foreign newspapers, magazines, and books were strictly censored to prevent "decadent" western influences from harming the population; alcohol consumption was strongly discouraged; and Victorian values of hard work, thrift, obedience, and discipline were promoted.

The personal style of Banda and his ability to make that style the cultural norm for the entire country helped create a distinct culture in Malawi. The positive aspects of that style are found in the teachers, dressed in three-piece suits, at their posts, teaching in the face of an impossible situation: a lack of classrooms and educational materials, and teacher to student ratios as high as 1:120. Or in the desire for education among the students, who overwhelmed the educational system when the fees were lowered and who often repeat the final standard, sometimes up to 10 times, in an attempt to get into a secondary school. The values Banda promoted—hard work, obedience, and discipline—are evident in the daily activities of the education system. But another side of those conservative values is also evident: an undervaluing of women's roles and the resulting negative attitudes about girls' education; a resistance to promoting family planning practices to slow the rapid population increase; an overly submissive and exam-driven method of education; and an emphasis on the style of how things are done that often overrides the most

efficient way of dealing with the problems facing the educational system. The focus on the appearance of things has often resulted in a failure to acknowledge the existence of problems, such as Malawi's high birth rate, AIDS, or the high level of poverty. The saying is that "there are no leaky roofs in Malawi."

POLITICAL, POLICY, AND EDUCATION SECTOR CONTEXTS

Malawi had long been a political ally of pro-western governments in southern Africa and had developed important aid and trade links with Britain, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the United States. In addition, it was the only country in the region openly maintaining ties with South Africa. Although there have been occasional statements of concern from western governments about human rights abuses, until very recently, these concerns have not been accompanied by any determined action to seek improvement. For example, although in 1989 the U.S. protested the detention of Jack Mapanje, a poet of international reputation arrested in 1987, it also cancelled $40 million of bilateral aid debt and doubled military assistance for fiscal year 1990 (*Africa Watch Committee*, 1990). A resolution was submitted to Congress in May 1990, calling for future aid to Malawi to be made conditional upon significant improvement in respect for human rights. By early 1993, all aid to Malawi was in danger of being discontinued as the members of the donor community joined forces to pressure the government to change. A referendum was held in June 1993, in which the people of Malawi voted to abandon the one-party system that had ruled them since independence. In May 1994, national elections were held and a new government took office.

In its first Education Development Plan from the early 1970s, the Government of Malawi stated that its intention was to focus on equity of access to educational services, relevance of curricula, and more efficient use of existing resources. The second Education Development Plan (1985-1995) continued with a similar set of stated objectives: the equalization of educational opportunity; the promotion of efficiency in the system; the improvement of physical and human resources; and the judicious use of limited resources. Most of the goals for the primary education subsector received attention, and progress was made toward a number of them. However, none of the goals were articulated in terms of their gender dimensions.

Over the years, growth in the education budget of Malawi has been insufficient to meet the needs of the system. The resource needs of the education sector have their roots in the increasing demand for educational services caused by intense population growth and the government's goal of providing primary education to 75 percent of all schoolage children. As a first step in making access more affordable to the parents, the Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced a policy to waive fees partially for standard 1 pupils in 1991-92, standard 2 in 1992-93, and standard 3 in 1993-94.

A major source of inefficiency in the education system has been the high rates of student repetition. Until 1992, there was no clear policy regarding repeating and no disincentive to repeaters. On the contrary, there were strong incentives to repeat in order to improve chances of gaining admission to the limited number of secondary school places, which are awarded according to examination scores. The net result has been that it took the primary education system an average of 16 years or more to produce a graduate of an eight-year curriculum (Lewis, 1990). This exacerbated the problems of crowded classrooms, high student/teacher ratios, and put pressure on the limited number of classrooms and amount of learning materials. Repetition especially hurts girls because they tend to drop out of school in large numbers at around 12 years of age and, if they have frequently repeated grades, that means they have acquired fewer skills than if they had completed more standards (Williams, 1992).

Although access, persistence, and completion rates for all students in Malawi were low, they were especially low for girls. Malawi witnessed a modest increase in girls' enrollment in primary school over the 1980s, from 40.5 percent of total enrollments in 1978-79 to 44.3 percent in 1987-88 (Government of Malawi, 1988). Since 1972, the MOE has followed a progressive quota policy for the selection of girls into conventional secondary and some tertiary levels of

education. However, a gender gap remained in the absolute number of children enrolled in school, and girls continued to drop out of primary school earlier and in greater numbers than boys. More studies of gender inequities in education exist for Malawi than for most sub-Saharan African countries. These studies list a large number of reasons for inequities, such as the low value parents and teachers place on girls' education, greater demands on girls' time for domestic work, automatic permanent expulsion from school for pregnancy, late school entry resulting in increased interference from initiation, marriage, and pregnancy, and a bias in the educational materials and teacher behavior that favors boys over girls (Davison and Kanyuka, 1990; Kaimila, 1988; Kainja, 1990; Kainja and Mkandawire, 1990; Kapakasa, 1990; Ilon, 1991; Malewezi, 1989, 1992; Mwanza, 1990).

DESIGN OF USAID's PROGRAM

The focus for the education program in Malawi was decided upon before the design process began for a number of reasons. Malawi was rated the country with the highest need for education support of the 35 sub-Saharan countries assessed in the 1988 Africa Bureau Action Plan for Basic Education. However, USAID/Malawi already had four strategic objectives, which meant that, due to agency constraints, education had to be a target of opportunity under one of those objectives if it was to be addressed. The argument could be made that a focus on girls' education supported the strategic objective of reducing population growth. The Government of Malawi had been unwilling to seriously address family planning in spite of the country's extremely high birth rate; a focus on girls' education could be seen as indirectly confronting the problem, since statistical correlations have been shown to exist between girls' education and decreases in fertility.

> The consistent support of Banda over the years by the U.S. Government was made without many strings attached, because Malawi backed western political policies and was oriented toward a capitalist economy. The Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) program was designed and implementation begun before the donor community began to apply the intense pressure for change that resulted in the referendum of 1993 and the elections of 1994. Thus, GABLE was constructed in a climate where serious reform was not requested or expected for the money granted.

The fundamental assumption underlying the focus on girls' attainment in GABLE is based on the general correlation that has been found world-wide between girls' education and decreases in fertility. The goal statement of the GABLE program is "to reduce fertility rates among Malawians through greater educational attainment of girls" (USAID, 1991 p. 2). By focusing on girls' education, fertility rates could be indirectly addressed at the same time that a badly needed education program could be supported within the USAID/Washington limitation on the number of strategic objectives. The case for the significance of the relationship between education and fertility in Malawi could easily be defended. For example, the relationship between the 2 percent of schoolage females who were enrolled in secondary school in 1970 and the 7.6 fertility rate[1] in 1991 for Malawi can be contrasted to a 6 percent enrollment in 1970 and 4.7 fertility rate in 1991 for Zimbabwe, or a 7 percent enrollment in 1970 and 5.1 fertility rate in 1991 for Lesotho (World Bank, 1993). Within Malawi, the case can be made by the clear relationship between the amount of female education and the fertility rate: women with no education had a fertility rate of 7.2; women with one to four years of schooling had a rate of 6.7; women with five to eight years had a rate of 6.2; and women with a secondary education had a rate of 4.4 (Government of Malawi, 1992).

Nevertheless, the MOE was not particularity interested in addressing gender inequities in the system, and did not initially understand the benefits of this

[1] Fertility rate is defined as the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her child bearing years and bear children throughout.

approach. In discussions during the design process, the MOE made it clear that it did not expect to sustain those parts of the program that specifically addressed girls' access, retention, and achievement after the USAID funds were no longer supplied. There was, however, a strong interest in the issue of girls' education within the Ministry of Community Services (MCS), the permanent secretary of which was the politically powerful sister of Banda's "official hostess." The MCS held a workshop, sponsored by USAID, on the problems of girls' access, persistence, and achievement in the summer of 1990, prior to the beginning the GABLE design process. The workshop was attended by a wide range of politically important participants, including the minister of education. The permanent secretary of MCS and a number of other Malawians in addition to MOE personnel were directly involved during the Program Assistance Initial Proposal (PAIP) stage of program development, but played little role in the final Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD) design. Representatives of the MOE continued to meet with the design team on a weekly basis throughout the PAAD design process.

Many of the reasons given for girls' dropout and low achievement were related to conditions that affected the entire system, but that had particular significance for girls. Consequently, the design targeted a larger proportion of policy reforms for the overall improvement of the education system, with a smaller percentage earmarked for aspects that focused on girls' education only. The GABLE design included components that addressed construction of classrooms and teachers' houses; increased utilization of teacher training institutes to produce more trained teachers; completion of a pilot program to test the practicality of double shifts in urban schools; introduction of competitive private sector distribution of educational materials; and registration of all primary students, with annual targets for reduced repetition. The MOE had greater enthusiasm for the system-wide reforms, in some instances seeing much of the USAID program as providing the impetus to do what they had already concluded they needed and wanted to do.

Due to the relatively large number of investigations into the constraints on girls' education in Malawi, there were many aspects of the problem that could have been addressed. Three GABLE components emerged in the final design that focused specifically upon girls' access, retention, and achievement: (1) project funded technical assistance to the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) to develop, test, and implement gender-appropriate curricula and learning materials for primary education, teacher training colleges, and in service training programs; (2) project assistance to provide technical support to a consortium of organizations to develop, test, and implement a national social mobilization campaign to change attitudes about the importance of girls' primary education; and (3) under the program agreement with the government of Malawi, fee waivers for girls in grades two through eight who had not repeated.

During the design process, there were a number of arguments in support of and against the fee waivers for non-repeating girls. In support of the waivers were the findings that, among the various approaches that have been tried worldwide in attempts to improve girls' attainment, fee waivers have had a positive impact. In addition, "lack of school fees" was one of the most frequent explanations for school dropout given by students, dropouts, parents, and teachers in a number of Malawian survey studies (Davision and Kanyuka, 1990; Kainja, 1990; Matengo, 1988). Annual school fees of 3.5 Malawi Kwachas (MK) per year per child, or about $1.35, and related expenses, estimated to be about MK20-30 ($7.70-11.60), for uniforms, materials, and incidental fees (Lewis, Horn, et al., 1990) require cash, a scarce commodity for rural subsistence smallholders. The phenomenon of high dropout rates in standard 1 in Malawi is believed to reflect in part the exodus of pupils when fees are due. When resources are scarce and the returns are perceived to be low, as appears to be the case for educational investment in rural areas of Malawi, outlays for girls' education may be the first to be sacrificed (Kainja and Mkandawire, 1990).

One set of arguments against adopting the fee waivers focused on the already overcrowded conditions in schools and the resultant poor quality of education, which was already having a disproportionately negative impact on girls' attainment. Eliminating fees would bring more girls into the schools, and making the fee waivers dependent upon promotion

would move them through the system. However, the increased retention that would probably result from the fee waivers could further deteriorate the learning environment for those girls. There was also a serious doubt that eliminating such a small amount of money would make enough difference to increase the number of girls enrolling and remaining in school. In addition, during the period of GABLE design, the Government of Malawi was considering another fee waiver policy, in response to a covenant in the World Bank program eliminating some of the fees for both boys and girls in standard 1. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also awarded one student from each school a fee waiver on the basis of achievement, with a ratio of one boy for each three girls. The inevitable confusion that would result from so many different fee waiver programs was seen as an additional drawback to initiating fee waivers as a component of GABLE.

The other major debate during the design of GABLE focused upon what was believed to be the government policy regarding girls who became pregnant. No condition requiring change in the government's policy on pregnancy was included in GABLE. Instead, the GABLE strategy was to address the problem of dropout due to pregnancy by urging girls to enter school earlier, in order that they could finish primary school before pregnancy became a problem. The message to enroll girls at an appropriate age was to be communicated through a social mobilization campaign project.

Pregnancy had been cited as major cause of girls' school dropout by teachers, head teachers, and parents in a number of Malawian survey studies. In the analyses done just before the design of the education program in Malawi, the policy of the Government of Malawi regarding pregnancy was consistently described as being one of mandatory, permanent expulsion: "MOE policy currently requires that schoolgirls found to be pregnant must be permanently expelled from the formal school system" (Lewis, Horn, et al., 1990). The policy had received extensive criticism for being discriminatory and inappropriately punitive from the Chitukuko Cha Amayi m'Malawi and other Malawian organizations as well as from the National Commission for Women in Development. Addressing policy changes of this type seemed to be something an NPA approach was ideally suited to do. On the other hand, the issue was considered by many to be too culturally sensitive for a foreign agency to tackle. Warwick, Reimers, and McGinn (1992) have pointed out the importance of the cultural setting for a program, suggesting that "an innovation seen as imposed by outsiders or offensive to a region or ethnic group may be resisted even if its elements are technically sound" (p. 297).

> The above summary of some of the suggestions and debates that occurred during the design process is important, as too often the assumption is later made that the design of a program involved "mistakes" resulting from a lack of information and analysis. The design process is an experimental act, involving making selections among competing problems and solutions in a complex setting that includes an inherent uncertainty about the future.

IMPLEMENTATION OF USAID'S PROGRAM

Fee Waivers

In general, the fee waivers for non-repeating girls were implemented with dedication by the MOE personnel involved in the program. One example of the responsibility that the MOE accepted for the program was its rapid assessment of the confusion created among parents and teachers by the fee waivers. Parents did not understand why only girls should receive the waivers. And, as had been anticipated, the program was difficult to differentiate from the government's elimination of part of the fees for all students in some grades and UNDP's fee waivers for high achieving students. The MOE quickly organized a workshop for district officers to instruct them about the fee waivers and of their obligation to disseminate this information.

> As the beneficiaries of the elite education system, it would seem likely that civil

servants would resist change. However, this particular change did not imply any shift in power that affected ethnic or class distinctions, because everyone, including those in power, had daughters.

When a number of primary schools were visited in the spring after the fee waivers had been introduced, headteachers were found to be well informed about the issues involved and many had held meetings with parents and teachers to discuss these issues. However, the controversy over granting fee waivers to only girls had not died down. In one small village the boys in the school went on strike, refusing to attend classes because they had not received fee waivers. In other communities, parents refused to pay the fees for boys because of the fee waivers for girls. Visits to schools throughout the country suggested that every town and village, no matter how small, had been affected by the fee waivers, which meant that the program had become extremely well known, if not always in a positive light.

The implementation of the fee waivers for girls would have proceeded with less friction had the social marketing project preceded the policy change. The postponement of the campaign was due to both contractual delays and to design, as the social marketing project was scheduled to begin later in the program in the hopes that a change in the quality of the schooling offered would have occurred by then. Unless governments address the problems within schools that prevent parents from wanting to send their daughters to school, social marketing projects to promote girls' access can be seen as simply shifting the blame for low female enrollment and persistence to parents.

The responsiveness of the MOE was also demonstrated by its anticipation of the possible problem that fee waivers for only non-repeating girls could create in terms of pressure on teachers to promote girls. The MOE formulated responses in anticipation of the problem, suggesting the formation of exam committees in each school to monitor exam results and promotion decisions.

The problem of pressure on teachers to promote girls appears not to have developed. One reason lies in the insurmountable social distance between the agricultural background of the bulk of the population and the more educated backgrounds of teachers in Malawi. In the urban areas, where educated parents might have challenged the authority of the teachers to pass or fail their daughters, the complaint of teachers was more often that, when there was any question of the student's performance, parents wanted their child to repeat the grade. The amount of money involved in the fee waiver was not important enough to these more affluent parents to override the possible benefits they saw for children in repetition. For many parents, a teacher asking a child to repeat a grade is perceived as a kindness, because the child, by repeating, is being given another opportunity to master the material required for the exams that determine admission to secondary school (Williams, 1992).

Pregnancy Policy

The third component of GABLE that focused specifically on girls' education, in addition to the fee waivers and the social mobilization project, consisted of creating a Gender Appropriate Curriculum (GAC) unit, staffed by one Malawian woman at the MIE. The GAC lecturer's basic responsibility was to become involved in the ongoing curriculum reform by working with subject specialists and textbook writers to correct the gender bias found in most Malawian textbooks. For those new textbooks and teacher guidelines that had already been written before the GAC lecturer began her work, which included most of the materials for standards 1 and 2, the GAC lecturer created supplementary materials for publication and distribution. In addition to working on the curriculum development process, the GAC lecturer conducted training sessions to sensitize subject advisors, textbook writ-

ers, inspectors, teacher trainers and trainees, headteachers, and teachers to gender issues in the classroom.

Over time, new opportunities to further the cause of increased awareness of gender bias in the educational system continued to present themselves to the GAC lecturer. She formed a task force to work on policy initiatives related to girls' persistence in school; she was frequently asked to provide input in national fora related to women and to gender issues; she was part of an MOE interview panel reviewing prospective inspector candidates, which had the explicit goal of increasing the number of women hired for these positions; and she contributed to the UNICEF-sponsored Village Based Primary School Curriculum.

> The goal orientation of program design and the need for accountability generally mean that the specific tasks personnel are responsible for accomplishing are spelled out during the design phase of the program. Although some of the tasks assigned to the GAC lecturer were specified in GABLE, the timing of the curriculum reform provided flexibility, which she could use to address the undefined aspects of her position. By simply supporting the right person in the right institutional position at the right time, a number of unforeseen benefits were achieved.

During some of the GAC lecturer's earliest presentations about gender issues in education at teacher training institutes, she discussed some of the reasons girls leave school. In every session, pregnancy came up as a major reason; yet the teachers and trainers tended to support the idea that a pregnant girl should leave school and not be permitted to return. Participants had strong feelings about the issue, and arguments frequently occurred during these discussions. The GAC lecturer could not remember actually seeing any policy requiring that pregnant girls be expelled, so she decided to find out what the actual policy was. MOE personnel looked through all of the policy files at the ministry, but were unable to locate any statement about pregnancy. While everyone had assumed that such a policy existed and had justified their actions on the basis of that policy for many years, it is now believed that no such policy statement was ever written or circulated.

If no such policy actually existed, the GAC lecturer felt that one needed to be created. In early 1993, the GAC lecturer and the GABLE Project desk officer, an MOE employee assigned the task of working with the program, submitted plans for a workshop on government policies affecting girls' enrollment and achievement. Each time they submitted the plan to the MOE for approval, it became "stuck" somewhere in the bureaucratic machinery. Later that year, the minister of education, along with 145 other participants from throughout Africa, attended a UNESCO/UNICEF conference on the benefits of and obstacles to educating girls in Burkina Faso. One of the policy issues addressed at that conference was the "re-admission of 'mother-girls' into the formal education system" (UNESCO/UNICEF, 1993, p. 2). The GAC lecturer made sure to put the proposed workshop plan on the minister's desk the day that the minister returned from the conference, and she approved the plan that afternoon.

The workshop was held several months later, and the lack of pregnancy policy and the general practice regarding student pregnancy were major issues discussed at that workshop. Other issues included family life education; scheduling science classes so girls as well as boys could take them; the female quota system for secondary and tertiary schools; and housekeeping chores as punishment for tardy primary schoolgirls. A number of different institutions were represented at the workshop: MOE, MIE, University of Malawi, Centre for Educational Research and Training, Educational Planning and Development Office, and the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and Community Service. A task force to address women's issues grew out of the workshop, as did a detailed plan of action that called for creating a policy on student pregnancy as one of its first activities. By the fall meeting of the task force, the MOE had already drafted the new pregnancy policy, which allowed girls to be readmitted to school one year after having a child, as long as there was assurance of adequate child care.

> While USAID had decided not to address the pregnancy policy issue through condi-

tionality, it had, however, encouraged and supported a technically able Malawian, who took on the role of stimulating policy dialogue over the issue and bringing together a local coalition of agencies and individuals who worked for policy reform. By allowing for a continual redefinition of the GAC lecturer's role as new opportunities appeared, the program introduced an adaptive dimension, which had not been defined in the original design. Examining the process that the GAC lecturer followed to generate policy reform provided an opportunity to consider what the necessary steps for policy reform might be.

The GAC lecturer was out of the country when the new policy on pregnancy was actually issued by the MOE. When she returned, she found no copy of the policy in her office or in any other office at the MIE. When she went to the MOE in search of the actual policy, offices that should have had a copy of the new policy did not. She finally located the policy statement in the archives of the MOE.

The new policy on pregnancy was distributed by the MOE in December 1993. It was sent directly to regional and district offices and secondary schools, but primary schools had to receive it from their district office. Among schools visited in the spring of 1994, a great deal of variation was found in terms of whether or not the headteacher had received a circular about the new policy, whether or not the teachers in the school knew about the new policy, whether or not a PTA meeting had been held to inform the community of the new policy, what the headteacher, teachers, and/or school board chair's attitudes were about the policy, and whether or not girls had begun to come back to school as a result of the new policy.

For example, the schools in the major urban district in the Southern Region had not received any written memo about the new policy, although most of the teachers had heard something about the policy on the radio. A district officer for this district claimed that the circular had not been sent out to the schools because it arrived during a teachers' strike in early 1994. In a more rural district directly adjacent to this city, all of the schools appeared to have received notification of the new pregnancy policy. However, none had scheduled a discussion of it for a PTA meeting, and frequently the circular describing the new policy had gone no further than the headteacher's office. The teachers in these schools frequently felt that distributing such information to the community was potentially dangerous, as it might encourage the female students to have sexual relationships.

The same unevenness in reaction to the new policy was found in the northern regions of the country. The headteacher in one rural school was convinced that the circular he had received from the district education office was marked "confidential," although he could not find the memo in order to confirm this; he was sure, therefore, that he was not supposed to let the community know about the new policy. In another rural northern school, the headteacher believed that the new pregnancy policy was part of the new constitution currently being drafted for the country and, because it was still in draft form, was not yet official. However, in an all-girls' school in the largest city in the Northern Region, the policy was already being acted upon: two students who had had a child had already returned to school, and eight others had returned to request transfers to other schools.

Although considerable effort was focused on the formation of the new policy on pregnancy, little effort was directed toward implementing it. There appear to have been a number of key junctures within the educational structure where the new pregnancy policy could have been derailed or reinterpreted: how it was or was not disseminated from the MOE; how it was or was not disseminated from the regional offices; how it was or was not disseminated from the district offices; and how it was or was not disseminated from the headteacher's office. In addition, even when the policy change was passed on to the next unit in the education structure, the lack of specific instructions about implementation allowed varying interpretations to distort or halt the change being introduced.

In general, where the policy was disseminated to the headteacher and from the headteacher to other teachers and the community, there appears to have been serious debate about it. While many parents were extremely pleased, as almost everyone is said to have female relatives that have been affected by the pregnancy policy, there was also a concern that the new policy would encourage sexual activity among the girls. This concern seemed to be especially common among the male headteachers, who compose the great majority of headteachers in Malawi; the two female headteachers who were interviewed were far more supportive of the new pregnancy policy.

IMPACTS

Fee Waivers

The evaluation of the GABLE program, which occurred in early 1994, explored only the traditional impacts of projects, and ignored the more far-reaching impacts that may have been occurring in terms of the ultimate goal of government commitment to policy change. However, there is no doubt, as the evaluation argued, that the GABLE fee waivers added to confusion about fees, and many parents were upset because they felt that girls were getting preferential treatment without understanding why they should. It is also likely that the fee waivers contributed to the already overcrowded classrooms in most Malawian schools. However, because almost all families had daughters, the fee waivers directly affected everyone, which led to an awareness of the program throughout the country. In many places, the fee waivers created debates and active community involvement in school meetings that discussed the waivers. The central regional education officer said that the fee waivers had a very good effect on the education system because they had "shaken it up," and that this aspect of GABLE had "injected life into the education system." She believed that the debates over just the girls getting fee waivers, while creating controversy, were nevertheless good; she felt that the controversy made people begin to think about why girls need to be educated.

The controversial nature of the fee waiver program placed the issue of girls' education on the government's agenda in a manner that could not be ignored, because the issue had been discussed throughout the country by every family that had a daughter. While the initial view of the government during the design of the program was that the waivers could not be sustained after GABLE was completed, during the three years the program was being implemented, representatives began to receive positive attention at international conferences for addressing what had become an important issue. During that time the MOE received a gradual education in the benefits of improving girls' education. As the country moved toward elections in early 1994, the government began to describe the fee waiver as its own policy, and advertised the waivers during the campaign as evidence of its support for women. The party elected to form the new Government of Malawi also campaigned on an education issue, the lifting of all fees for all students. While the new government may have learned from the GABLE program the power of removing fees, the new government's shift to removing fees for all students eliminates the focus on educating girls, a focus that may be lost if new policies are not developed out of the national dialogue that was created by the program.

Girls' gross enrollment rates, which had been rising steadily during the 1990s, jumped an estimated 130 percent in the 1994-95 school year as a result of the new government's policy of free primary education. The steady rise in enrollment prior to this school year was due, at least in part, to the fee waivers granted to non-repeating girls, which benefited approximately 500,000 girls each year, and other activities undertaken under the GABLE program. Between 1991-92 and 1992-93, the first year in which the GABLE fee waivers were offered, girls' net enrollment increased by twice as much as boys', and girls' net enrollment for the first time outnumbered boys' net enrollment.

A sample of data collected in the spring of 1994 from a small number of primary schools in the northern and southern regions of Malawi[2] suggests that girls' achievement, as measured by pass rates, may have been higher in 1992-93, the first year of GABLE,

than in the previous two years. The overall decrease in repetition rates between 1992-93 and 1993-94, the first year in which the full impact of the GABLE program could be seen, was more pronounced for girls than for boys. Girls' repetition decreased in all standards, while boys' decreased only in standards 3 through 8. And, except for standard 8, girls' repetition decreased more than did boys' (Williams, 1995).

Pregnancy Policy

The GAC lecturer was able to both fulfill her role in reforming the curriculum and to take a leadership role in setting up a task force that successfully confronted policy issues affecting girls' educational persistence and achievement. The new policy on pregnancy supported by the task force had been implemented, although not without resistance. Because the new policy was created through the joint efforts of persons with influence in a wide range of Malawian institutions, it was not perceived as having been imposed by outsiders. The pregnancy policy was very popular with parents throughout the country, and advocates who had become organized through their involvement in creating the policy existed at many levels of the system. The range of these advocates suggest that they will be able to overcome resistance to change sufficiently to see the policy successfully established and sustained.

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[2] The many hours Maria Mpweya spent collating this data is greatly appreciated.

2. Ghana

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The wide range of ethnic diversity in Ghana at the time of European contact was altered and often magnified through the highly differential nature of the connection to European societies. European merchant groups persistently increased their interactions with the coastal people of Ghana from the late 15th century onward, forming relationships that deeply transformed the region's economy. Trade that had previously passed northward, in which the northern part of Ghana had played an important role in interactions with the Sudan-Sahal region further to the north, was reoriented southward to the coast. In the 18th century, Ashanti emerged as powerful state that, through raids to generate captives for the slave ships, enhanced the depopulation of the middle region of Ghana (Songsore, 1989). Although the British annexed the entire coastal region of Ghana in 1874, the British administration only exported labor from the northern region and, until 1900, contact with the British was almost non-existent in the north. By the end of the 19th century, Western education was well established among the southern people of Ghana in the coastal region and changes in the nature of the economy and the governing bodies in the southern region created a context in which the benefits of a Western education became increasing apparent.

In 1948, the proportion of the population with six years of education or more stood at 5.8 percent in the southern region, 3.9 percent in the Ashanti middle region, and 0.21 percent in the northern region (Forster, 1962). While fewer schools had been created in the middle and northern regions of the country than in the south, those that did exist frequently remained partially empty. Demand for education remained low in these regions due to a lack of perceived relationship to either economic or governmental opportunity. In addition to the colonial period having had little impact on the economy of the more northern areas, the British policy of indirect rule favored the persistence of traditional authority structures and political units in the Ashanti and northern regions, which had maintained ethnic criteria for advancement in administration. While this unequal geographic distribution of the changes associated with development was hardly unique to Ghana, it was made more explicit in the Ghanaian context by the correspondence in the lines separating the major zones of differential development to the regional divisions among the major ethnic groups.

The early attempts of the independent Government of Ghana to deemphasize the role of ethnic units and to create equal opportunities irrespective of regional or ethnic origin only enhanced the advantages of the southern ethnic groups, because the primary criterion for recruitment tended to be possession of formal education qualifications. Between 1951 and 1960, the Government of Ghana launched a massive expansion of the educational system. Although rates of expansion were greatest in the north, the greatest absolute increase in schooling occurred in the southern area, where there had been a greater unmet demand for education (Foster, 1962). In research that examined the backgrounds of Ghanaian secondary students between 1961 and 1974, it was demonstrated that the large-scale expansion of the educational system made it comparatively less likely that the children from rural and/or low socioeconomic backgrounds (the statistics do not, unfortunately, differentiate the children by geographic regions) would receive places in the nation's secondary schools (Weis, 1979).

This result could have been forestalled only by focusing a greater amount of school development in the north than in the south, a course of action that would have had serious political implications for the government, as the ethnic groups of the southern

region represented at least 50 percent of the total population and controlled a disproportionate amount of the country's power and wealth. While providing an equal education to all groups might be the expressed goal of many governments, in most instances the most that can be expected without some form of positive discrimination or affirmative action is educational equality, distributing the goods of the educational system equally among different groups of students. Although until the mid-1970s Ghana had one of the most respected educational systems in West Africa, that reputation was based on the relative quality of the education provided, and the system continued to be one that benefited disproportionately the more urban and southern geographic areas of the country (Antiwi-Nsiah, 1991).

POLITICAL, POLICY, AND EDUCATION SECTOR CONTEXTS

Until the mid-1970s, Ghana had one of the most highly-developed educational systems in West Africa. Along with Ghana's economic decline over the next decade, the quality of its educational system deteriorated, and enrollment rates stagnated or fell. Public financing of education fell from 6.4 percent of GDP in 1976 to 4.4 percent in 1983 (World Bank, 1993, p. 1). Existing schools were neglected, teachers were underpaid and unsupervised, and almost no instructional materials were purchased. The economic decline led to a mass exodus of trained teachers, especially the more highly-trained and qualified school teachers. A survey carried out in 1985 revealed that most of the primary and secondary schools had no textbooks, no chalk, no equipment, and no teaching materials. The majority of teachers were untrained, and all schools were overstaffed, not only with unqualified teachers, but also with huge numbers of non-teaching personnel.

When the quality of the educational system deteriorated during the economic decline, the impact was especially acute in those regions on the periphery of the society. Significant imbalances in the distribution of educational services among areas of the country meant that conditions in some regions were far worse than in others; it was estimated that enrollment ratios in the southern half of the country were double those for the northern half of Ghana. While, according to 1989-90 Government of Ghana data, 69 percent of all Ghanaian primary-aged children were enrolled in school, only 49 percent were enrolled in the Northern Region, 49 percent in the Upper West Region, and only 33 percent in the Upper East Region. On the other hand, in the Greater Accra Region, 77 percent of all children aged 6-12 were enrolled in primary schools (Government of Ghana, 1988).

While female enrollment as percent of total enrollment in primary schools was about 45 percent for Ghana in general, which compares favorably to rates in other West African countries, in the northern regions, girls' participation rates were far lower. The 1989-90 statistics of the MOE ranked the 110 districts of the country according to the percentage of girls enrolled in primary schools: the 10 districts that represented the lowest percentages of enrollment were all in the north, where the percentages of female enrollment ranged from 16 percent to 33 percent. Female retention rates, calculated as sixth grade enrollments as a percentage of first grade enrollments, were as low as 29 percent in the Upper East and 30 percent in the Upper West, and only up to 54 percent in the Northern Region, which included districts with retention rates as low as 9 percent.

Since 1983, Ghana has pursued a macro-economic policy of economic recovery and structural adjustment. Unlike adjustment programs in many other countries, Ghana placed great emphasis on the social sectors and succeeded in halting the precipitous decline in the provision of education and health services. Its educational reform, begun in 1986, was designed around a 1973 education commission report that had never been implemented, due to a lack of funds and to elite opposition to changing the educational status quo. The program focused on reducing the inordinate length of pre-university education, improving pedagogic efficiency and the quality and relevance of education, containing and partially recovering costs, and enhancing sector management and budgeting procedures. It does not appear that the government had any objectives involving educational equity at that time.

DESIGN OF USAID's PROGRAM

During the design of the USAID Primary Education Program (PREP) in 1989, the inequities in educational resources and enrollments that existed among the geographic areas of the Ghana were perceived by USAID as insufficiently addressed by government policies because "the Government of Ghana has currently insufficient resources and knowledge about the social dynamics in inequities to pursue its educational objectives..." (USAID, 1990, p. H-1).

> USAID assumed that the inequities in the education system of Ghana were not being addressed due to a lack of analysis of the problem and a lack of resources, two problems for which donor technical expertise and funds could offer solutions. There was, in fact, little motivation for the Government of Ghana to attempt to reduce inequities in its educational system at that time. Ghana's reputation as having had a good educational system in the past had been tied to the system's elite nature; the current goal was to reestablish that reputation and to gain the continued support of donors such as the World Bank and USAID, which were more interested in efficiency and quality reforms. Education of the rural poor would do little to further these causes and could drain money away from them. In addition, ethnic and religious divisions existed between those in power and those occupying most of the northern areas of the country, where the inequities in the educational system were most pronounced.

During the discussions surrounding the design of PREP, the Government of Ghana resisted acknowledging the clear inequities in the distribution of educational resources and in enrollment and retention data between the northern and southern regions of the country. The design team, however, did not feel that the imbalances illustrated by the data could be ignored. PREP was one of the first of the NPA education programs designed in Africa, and the methodology of NPA seemed ideally suited to this situation. It was believed that through conditionality focused upon the issue of equity, a change in policy, which the government was clearly uninterested in making on its own, could be encouraged.

> Experience in a number of countries has now indicated that the amount of leverage that conditionality can offer is limited unless a country is convinced that it must make policy changes for its own sake (Crouch, et al., 1993; Hartwell, in Evans, 1994; McCleary, 1991).

The Equity Improvement Program (EIP) was designed to be a free standing component of PREP. Its objectives were stated as: 1) to provide special resources to a subset of those most underrepresented in the primary education system; and 2) to serve as an instrument for the formulation of an equity improvement policy by testing pilot activities designed to improve equity in specific target areas. Two of the PREP conditions precedent to disbursement of funds are related to the EIP: 1) prior to the disbursement of tranche two, a USAID approved pilot equity improvement program will have been initiated by the MOE; and 2) prior to tranche four, the Government of Ghana will have implemented an equity improvement policy.

> The spacing of tranche conditionality over the life of the program corresponded to what has been proposed as a rational policy development cycle (Haddad, 1994, p. 10): the "analysis of the existing situation" could be seen as having been completed by the donor-conducted sector assessment, which provided data demonstrating the inequities in the system; "generation of policy options" could be seen as the set of pilot activities that satisfied the tranche two condition; and "evaluation of policy option" along with "making the policy decision" could be seen as the equity improvement policy that would emerge to satisfy the tranche four condition.

No conditionality addressed the four other aspects of the policy cycle Haddad has outlined: "planning for policy implementation," "policy implementation," "policy impact assessment," and "subsequent policy cycles."

In the social analysis of the PAAD for the Primary Education Program, a strategy was delineated for the EIP. This scheme pointed out that, due to the lack of information that would have been necessary to understand the social dynamics behind the statistical indications of geographically-based inequities, it would be a mistake to prescribe specific remedies without further analysis. Consequently, it was proposed that, in order to help the government develop, formulate, and implement an equity improvement policy, a significant amount of research and social analysis be undertaken under EIP. It specifically proposed that this research act as a guide for the design and implementation of the pilot equity activities to be undertaken. It also suggested that the collection and analysis of social data continue throughout the program in order to form a basis for fine-tuning and evaluating the activities.

There is no evidence that any of the studies recommended in the PAAD were carried out between the onset of PREP in 1989 and the summer of 1991, four months before the tranche two condition requiring the implementation of equity pilot activities had to be met. Consequently, the selection of which equity improvement activities would be implemented was not drawn from a research-based analysis of why such different enrollment and retention statistics existed in the southern and northern regions of the country.

The timing for reform activities is often set by conditionality. One interpretation of the difficulties encountered by the EIP could be that the pace that was set may have been too rapid to accommodate needed research and the type of host country involvement necessary to promote ownership and capacity building. Another interpretation could be that insufficient attention was focused on the EIP component of the program because it lacked high priority with both the MOE and USAID. When the time remaining to meet deadlines becomes short, there is a tendency for program managers to act as if the solutions currently in style among development agencies will fit whatever problems exist in a country, without researching the nature of that fit, or searching for additional and more context-specific solutions.

A single U.S. consultant, working without a government counterpart, created what was thought to be a preliminary exploration of possible pilot activities during a one-month period. The government's role in the process of designing the pilot activities was extremely restricted, consisting primarily of choosing from among what was offered and promoting two activities that had initially been suggested as examples in the social analysis of the PAAD and for which the government had already developed plans.

Although host country participation is a desired part of all USAID programs, when time becomes short the "generation of policy options" frequently becomes a donor activity that involves government personnel only in a final acceptance, rejection, or modification role, and completely overlooks other stakeholders.

The resulting plan that was promoted by both USAID and the government involved the design and implementation of a wide range of different activities. If prior research had been conducted and a discourse with a wider range of Ghanaian stakeholders had been undertaken, then several pilot activities that were context-specific and had the potential to be introduced on a national level might have been isolated. Instead, because of the political nature of offering special resources to only some schools in some districts, it was argued that a significant number of different activities were needed in order to include as many districts as possible, while still meeting the program objective that the pilot activities be focused on "those most underserved in the primary education system (USAID, 1990). The original number of pilot activities suggested was, in fact, 20, a number later reduced to eight different activities, though still an extremely ambitious number.

There appears to have been no analysis of whether or not any of the proposed activities could lead to a basis for a future national equity policy. No ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities were built into the design of the pilot studies, which meant there was no way to recognize when activities were failing to accomplish what they had been envisioned as doing. Baseline data on enrollments, teachers, and facilities in the schools selected to host the pilot activities were collected after the selections had been announced and the activities, in some instances, had already been initiated; implementation of the pilot activities began in October 1991, and baseline data collection was not completed until May 1992.

Rondinelli (1994) suggests that pilot projects can be used to test the results of experiments under a greater variety of conditions and to adapt and modify to local conditions and needs the methods, technologies, or procedures that have proven to be effective in other countries. However, he adds, the relatively few studies that have been done of pilot projects suggest that careful attention must be given to choosing appropriate locations, structuring activities to fit local needs and conditions, collecting baseline data, and, especially, monitoring and evaluating the project to determine conditions that influence success or failure.

The PREP design employed a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) to be responsible for overseeing the activities described in the program documentation, including implementing and managing the EIP pilot activities. The structure of the PIU consisted of a separate director with his/her own assistant(s) for each of the components. It was not until the summer of 1992 that a director was appointed for the EIP, the only component that had been functioning with an underqualified and inexperienced person in charge.

While the existence of a PIU facilitated the implementation of PREP, it ran counter to some of the basic reasons for adopting an NPA mode of assistance. The degree to which the EIP could be expected to have a significant impact upon MOE policy, especially given the government's lack of enthusiasm for equity reforms, was limited from the beginning by the lack of integration of the PIU into the structures or processes of the MOE. There was relatively little direct MOE interaction with the EIP, either in terms of influencing what approaches were adopted, or directly learning from the experiences of the pilot activities. The degree to which the pilot studies could, therefore, inform policy decisions made by the MOE was filtered through a very narrow and indirect association. The lack of attention to EIP management within the PIU illustrated the perceived relative lack of significance of the equity study among the various components of PREP.

Approximately 50 percent of the pilot activities were implemented in schools in the north, while some activities were located in all 10 regions of Ghana. A great deal of care was taken in selecting the districts and schools that would actually receive the pilot activities, an emphasis that protected the government from any implication of favoritism. The implementation of the equity pilot activities included workshops for all of the district education officers from those districts where pilot activities would be located and media releases about the programs would be undertaken.

The high-profile, political importance of these selections worked, to some degree, in opposition to the stated goals of EIP. Schools that met the individual school criteria had been carefully identified in all regions of the country, although the data used for the design of PREP indicated a highly disproportional geographic distribution of disadvantaged schools in the northern regions.

In contrast to the care given to establishing criteria for the selection of districts and schools, no criteria was offered for matching the eight different pilot

activities to specific schools. As there was a great range in the desirability of activities in the eyes of the district and school personnel, as well as a great range in the relative costs of undertaking the different activities, there was, in many instances, a lack of association between the specific needs of each community and what they were offered. For example, one community that received the pilot activity designed to promote community participation had already been involved for several years in a World Bank-funded program that involved community participation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF USAID's PROGRAM

The design and implementation of the pilot activities in time for the second tranche review could be viewed as a case of complying with the letter rather than the intent of the condition. It was probably clear to everyone involved in the tranche review that there were serious problems with the activities that had been undertaken, both in terms of their internal designs and in terms of the larger goal of providing information for policy reform. Yet considerable effort had been put into launching the pilots, including a great deal of publicity, and it would have appeared an act of poor faith to halt disbursing funds at that late point when, in fact, the condition had been technically met. Instead, suggestions were made for seriously monitoring the activities in order that information could be gained about the difficulties and successes of such a large range of different approaches. Unfortunately, there was no specific condition tied to the EIP for the third tranche, so there was little motivation to follow the suggestions in the short term.

> "Conditionality...comes into conflict with the need felt by donors to show measurable, attributable results quickly, and the temptation, therefore, is to allow countries to fudge the data so that the disbursement process can continue" (Crouch, et al., 1993, p. 6).

The lack of analytical skills in the EIP unit allowed the misconception that the primary goal of the pilot activities was to record positive impacts for each of the activities; an emphasis on the "success" of each activity provided the guiding direction for data collection and management of the activities. During the third tranche review, progress over the year since implementation of the pilot studies was documented primarily in terms of increased enrollments in all schools with pilot activities.

> As only a few of the activities were designed to increase access, and most of the activities attempted to improve the quality of schooling, the choice of enrollment increases as a method for evaluating the activities had less to do with their relative successes than with the fact the enrollments throughout the northern regions were increasing. No control schools were used for comparison with the pilot schools. There was no information on how well the pilot activities addressed the actual needs of the communities, how people had reacted to them, what logistical problems had been encountered, what had made each activity successful or not, what the differences were among schools where the same activity had been implemented with varying degrees of impact, and dozens of other questions that could have focused on the effort and funds put into the activities.

Independent of any conditionality or USAID monitoring and evaluation activity, visits to schools in which the eight pilot activities had been implemented were conducted soon after the third tranche review[3]. The observations described below, although brief and including only four of the activities, were shared with USAID and the PIU. The difficulties

[3] Pilot schools in which each of the eight pilot activities had been implemented were visited, but more sites for some activities were visited than for others. Schools visited included: three with scholarships for girls, three with motorbikes and bicycles, three with teacher housing, two with textbooks and materials, two with furniture, and one each with community involvement, increased retention competition, and school library.

Table 1: Equity Improvement Pilot Activities

Activity	Description	No. of Sites
Scholarships for Girls	Provide financial award to parents of all girls in pilot schools for payment of school costs (desks, books, materials)	4
Motorbikes and Bicycles for Teachers	Provide free motorbike to trained headteacher and free bicycles to each trained teacher in pilot schools	6
Teacher Housing	Provide house for trained teacher	15
Textbooks and Instructional Materials	Provide a free set of basic school materials (core textbooks and materials) to all students in pilot schools	4
Furniture for Students	Provide free dual desks and chairs for all students in pilot schools	5
Increased Retention Competition	Hold Competition among four schools within a district for best attendance	20
Community Involvement	Sponsor 5 meetings per year for parents and techers; invite parents to talk to 3 classes per year	4
School Library	Provide 150 books in locked bookcase for 5th and 6th grades	8

observed in the implementation of the pilot activities could have been used as a basis for adjusting the activities before the second year of administration. Instead, due to the perception of the purpose of the pilot activities being to prove each one successful rather than to be experiments for exploring what could work to improve education in the disadvantaged areas, the descriptions of implementation difficulties were interpreted as criticism by the PIU and ignored.

Scholarships for Girls were selected as a pilot activity and were implemented in four schools in spite of the fact that this is a fairly expensive approach and, therefore, an unlikely candidate upon which to base a national policy. No guidance had been offered from the EIP unit to the headteachers of schools receiving this pilot activity that suggested how to handle matters such as transfers, counseling parents of the girls receiving scholarships, or explaining to the community why only girls were receiving scholarships. The impressive increases in enrollment in one school were found, when broken down by grade at the school, to have occurred in all grades. As the program had only been in operation for one year, all increases in the second through sixth grades were due, the headmaster freely admitted, to transfers from other schools within walking distance to the school, or from girls being sent to live with relatives in the area in order to take advantage of the scholarship program. The lack of control for transfers to the school, and the presentation of the data without a breakdown by grade, made the actual impact of the activity impossible to evaluate. In another school, the headteacher chose to prevent transfers, making the data among the schools even harder to evaluate due to the inconsistent interpretations of how to implement the pilot activity. In another school where the scholarships for girls had been introduced, the headteacher, who taught a first grade class of 84 students—due to the increased enrollment created by the scholarships, took it upon herself to meet with the parents of the girls receiving the scholarships, explain the program, and help the parents work out schedules that allowed the girls to attend school in spite of an extreme water shortage that had placed heavy demands upon girls to bring water from considerable distances. The appropriateness of the activity for this school in the Northern Region was apparent from the 1988-89 enrollment figures: 162 boys and 33 girls. Yet, in a third school selected for this pilot activity, there had been 65 boys and 64 girls enrolled in 1988-89. The headteacher reported that “the situation for the boys is horrible,” and “the boys also need to be considered for the pilot project,” indicating his lack of understanding of why the scholarships were being offered.

Motorbikes and Bicycles Incentive, a second pilot activity involving presenting motorbikes to trained headteachers and bicycles to all other trained teachers, was designed as an incentive to increase the percentage of trained teachers in the more remote areas of the country. Because each district education office is responsible for teacher placement within that district, the motorbikes and bicycles were allocated to the office for the district within which each of the schools with this pilot activity was located, and that office was responsible for their distribution. In addition to measuring increases in student enrollment, the

EIP documentation indicated an increase in the number of trained teachers in most of the pilot schools with the bicycles incentive. One school had shifted from one trained teacher in the previous year, which was about average for the northern regions, to six trained teachers in the year after the implementation of the program. The additional five trained teachers had been transferred from other schools in the area by the district education officer, who complained about one teacher who refused to be transferred from his village in spite of the enticement of the bicycle. Five of the teachers were using their new bicycles to travel from their former villages, as they had not yet been able to find housing near the pilot school. In the majority of the transfers, the teachers were leaving schools where they had been the only trained teacher and were replaced by untrained teachers. This concentration of trained teachers in this pilot school has to be evaluated in the context of a district to which a total of 10 trained teachers had been posted that year, and where three had refused to come, and four of the trained teachers who had been there the previous year had left the area. The district officer said that he requested these transfers on his own initiative; the EIP administrator saw no problem in these transfers but, rather, an indication of how well the pilot activity was working to attract trained teachers. In another school with this pilot activity, only two of the teachers received bicycles, both of whom had been at the school for several years. The remaining four bicycles were housed at the district education office in spite of the fact that posting to this pilot school was not in the hands of the district officer, because it was designated as a religious school and was managed at the regional level. In a third pilot school, bicycles were distributed to four trained teachers, two of whom had come to the school from training since the implementation of the program. There had been no transfers to this school and the bicycles were reported as saving the teachers up to 40 minutes in commuting time. The selection of this school for a pilot activity had so inspired the community that they had bought cement and supplied the labor to construct floors for all of the classrooms. In none of the schools had an attempt been made to monitor the effects of the bicycles on teacher absenteeism, a major problem in Ghana.

Teacher Housing. One year after implementation, none of the houses for headteachers, designed to attract new, well-trained headteachers to the areas, had been completed. Construction had, however, begun at three sites; in all three cases, the teachers who would be living in the new houses had already been teaching in the community for a number of years. In two of those three villages, the headteacher who would be living in the house did not currently teach in the primary school, as each was a headteacher for both the primary and the junior secondary schools, and was actually teaching at the junior secondary level. The selection of these schools for this pilot activity seems questionable, as it would be almost impossible to find impacts on the primary school level. Due to the very large amount of money involved in constructing these houses, which involved multiple bedrooms, glass windows, tin roofs, brick and cement walls, and direct access to water, the funding for this pilot activity was managed through the district assemblies rather than through the district offices. Because the education structure had been bypassed for managing the activity, impacts such as capacity building within the district offices could not be considered when evaluating this pilot activity. In addition, because of the elaborate nature of the houses being constructed, most of the labor hired to build the houses was imported into the communities, making it impossible to propose increased cash flow from the construction as an indirect impact of the activity. The style of these houses, in spite of their juxtaposition to villages composed of thatch and mud houses, and schools with no roofs or furniture, was not seen as inappropriate by the EIP. The design for the headteacher house had originated with the MOE, which felt that the houses for primary headteachers should not be inferior in quality to those being built by the World Bank for secondary headteachers, although the expense of the house clearly made it an impractical model upon which to base a national policy.

Textbooks and Instructional Materials were provided to all of the students in each of the pilot schools that had been assigned this activity. One of the schools receiving textbooks and instructional materials was located on a major paved road only an hour from Accra. Nine of its 10 teachers were trained, the aver-

age teacher to student ratio was 1:29 (after student increases due to transfers because of free textbooks), almost all of the students had furniture, and the number of textbooks per student far exceeded the national average. The log books for the school indicated that the school had received 20 visits in the year since implementation from MOE, PREP, and USAID-related persons. In spite of the fact that all children in the school had received all of their textbooks from PREP, the school collected the 250 Cedis textbook user fee from all parents during the first year of implementation anyway. When the EIP unit realized that some of the schools involved in this pilot activity had collected the user fees, it decided that nothing would be done about the first year's fees, but that the schools would be notified not to collect fees the next year. Yet this school, only one hour from the MOE and the recipient of so many official visits, was never informed, and had just finished collecting the user fees once again. No data was being collected in the school about what happened to the textbooks, which were given to the students, after the students had moved on to a new grade. In none of the schools receiving textbooks and instructional materials had any attempt been made to systematically question teachers and students about the impact of each student having his or her own textbook on teachers, students, and learning. The only data that was collected from any of these schools consisted of enrollment figures, which indicated a marked increase due to the number of students who had transferred to the school from nearby areas, or who had come to live with relatives in the area to take advantage of the materials being supplied.

IMPACTS

One PREP condition for disbursing tranche four stipulated that the Government of Ghana would have implemented an equity improvement policy based upon the findings of the pilot activities. Considering the lack of serious monitoring of these activities[4], and the range of impacts that the activities might have had on quality, access, and/or retention, it is clear that no simple method for comparing the pilots existed. As no basis for comparison with non-pilot schools had been established, there was no way even to determine how successful any activity had been, whatever its goal. The mid-term evaluation team that examined PREP just before the tranche four review suggested that this condition be postponed until the government had more time to investigate the experiences of the pilot experiments and to decide how to evaluate their relative performance (EDC, 1993).

> "The emphasis on meeting schedules and achieving preconceived objectives makes [international assistance organizations] reluctant to uncover and correct mistakes. Often, sponsoring agencies of funding institutions ignore the results of monitoring and evaluation" (Rondinelli, 1994, p. 103).

Rather than attempting to postpone fulfilling the condition, or risk not releasing the fourth tranche by not complying with the condition, USAID assisted the government in developing an equity policy. As the primary data that was gathered about all of the pilot activities were enrollment figures, the case could be made, using that data, that the scholarships for girls activity had the greatest impact, since it produced the largest increase in enrollments of the eight activities. The new policy statement, which was signed by the minister of education in time for the fourth tranche, states that "the Ministry of Education has

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4 During the course of PREP, primarily data on enrollments were collected from all of the pilot schools and, in some instance, other information, such as the numbers of trained teachers, numbers of textbooks, etc. The limited time available for the mid-term evaluation made extensive examination of the pilot activities difficult, due to the travel distances involved. The PREP design required "an external end-of-program evaluation...to evaluate progress toward achievement of program purpose-level objectives..." (USAID, 1990, p. 8-1), which resulted in a more detailed collection of data about the impacts of the pilot activities, but did not supply systematic information about the specific difficulties and rewards associated with each undertaking.

developed this Equity Improvement Policy to exempt all girls, P3-P6 in these remote-underserved areas of Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions, from payment of book user fees. They will also be provided with free stationery, exercise books, pens, pencils, erasers, and rulers with immediate effect." In addition, the policy also states that "those trained teachers who accept postings to remote underserved rural areas...will be provided with bicycles, which they will own after serving in the rural areas for three years."

The cover sheet for this new policy directs copies to be made available to regional and district directors of education for immediate compliance. Regional and district directors reported receiving the policy notice without any additional information about how it should be implemented. With no logistical system to carry out the policy, the easiest solution, in most cases, was to ignore it. Six months later, during national conferences about the state of education in Ghana to which regional and district directors were invited, the policy was only mentioned once, in the form of a question about the difficulties encountered in attempting to implement the policy. The message conveyed at that time was that the policy needed to be reexamined before being implemented.

> The conditionality that addressed equity issues stipulated a process that stopped short at forming an equity policy. No condition addressed the implementation of the policy that had been produced, and there was, in fact, nothing to prevent the government from continuing on without making changes. Those who would have benefited from the new policy–the students and teachers in the northern regions–had no organized way to influence the implementation of the policy; central ministry personnel were unlikely to push for reform in an area where the status quo benefited their children. Instead of USAID moving the Government of Ghana to make policy changes that would improve the distribution of educational resources to disadvantaged groups through the threat of withholding disbursements, the government was able to meet program conditionality without making any real effort in the direction of equity reforms.

3. Comparative Analysis

TIMING OF REFORM WITHIN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE HOST COUNTRY

Over the last two years USAID's Africa Bureau has been studying its NPA programs in education as part of an attempt to understand from that collective experience what has and has not worked and why. Out of that research a set of guidelines has emerged for when NPA has been the most effective (USAID, 1995). In a strict sense, neither Ghana nor Malawi fulfill all of the requirements, but probably neither do any of the governments in Africa that most need assistance in their educational reforms. Ghana, however, does meet most of the pre-conditions mentioned and, apart from the equity component of PREP, the education program there has met most of its goals. Malawi, on the other hand, clearly did not meet, at the very least, two of the criteria at the point in time when GABLE was designed and first implemented: (1) it did not have a political environment that was moving toward greater civic participation in policy analysis and formation—it was not possible to hold public debate and negotiations in which openly critical information and viewpoints were considered; and (2) there had been no public process of review and analysis within the education sector, and the reforms being implemented did not represent a coherent, feasible, and known consensus involving parents, local authorities, teachers, the private sector, and the education ministry bureaucracy and cabinet. In fact, during the early years of GABLE, any criticism of government policy was preceded by a careful look over both shoulders to see who might be listening.

Nevertheless, if only the equity components of the two programs are compared, the fee waivers for girls in Malawi received a great deal more governmental support than did the rural/regional equity program in Ghana. And, if the impacts are measured in terms of placing the equity issue on the agenda in a manner that is debated throughout the country, then the Malawian example was far more successful in reaching its goal. There are a number of reasons for this difference, but in terms of the pre-conditions considered significant for a successful NPA program, one important ingredient appears to have been neglected: timing.

During the life of the programs described, Ghana was perceived as the "good" African nation, doing what it should to reverse the neglect its once impressive educational system had fallen into. Both the government and USAID were willing to be tolerant regarding the inequities in the system, as long as everyone was delivering in terms of the agreed upon structural changes necessary to put the system back on its feet. Relative to the quality and efficiency components of PREP, the entire equity ingredient of the program was treated in a more superficial manner: in its design as a pilot study; in its implementation with insufficient attention to staff, monitoring, and ultimate goals; and in its final paper-only policy. In Ghana it was probably simply too soon to begin to focus on equity, everyone being far more concerned with halting the complete collapse of the educational system than how evenly its services were distributed. The new World Bank project in Ghana has now specifically focused on the most disadvantaged schools in the country, marking a shift to directly addressing equity as its major concern. It is, however, a project, and not an NPA program.

During the same period of time, Malawi had become very much the "bad" African nation, its political usefulness eliminated by the end of the cold war, and its dictatorial rule and history of human rights abuses being reevaluated under a new policy of promoting democracy in Africa. The government was accustomed to receiving aid with few if any conditions attached, and was often unwilling to make sig-

nificant policy changes. The context was, however, permeated with a sense of growing crisis, and the expectation that the crisis would, eventually, lead to reform. Gender inequities, although pronounced, were not necessarily the most important problems facing the educational system, but they were problems that could be addressed, given the nature of the government in power and the particular configuration of objectives in the USAID Mission. On the eve of sweeping changes in the government of Malawi, GABLE benefited from the growing expectation of change and was able to make remarkable progress in putting gender equity on the policy agenda due, in part, to its timing. It became a sign of change during a period when change of any type was beginning to be perceived as both possible and positive.

TIMING OF REFORM WITHIN THE POLICY CONTEXT OF THE HOST COUNTRY

There is a tendency among donors to believe that they are always beginning a reform process at the first stage in a policy cycle. All policy contexts are always, to some degree, in some phase of a reform process. The timing of the USAID programs in Ghana and Malawi occurred not only within different contexts of government urgency, but also within different stages of policy reforms.

While the timing of these equity programs within processes of host country political change contributed to greater endorsement by the Malawi's MOE than by Ghana's, neither country was convinced that it needed to address inequities in the education system for its own benefit. There is a growing consensus within the current literature on policy formation and planning that sustainable change in education is more likely when the government is convinced that it needs the changes being proposed and when a wide range of stakeholders have had a voice in the policy creation (Brandon, 1990 ; Crouch et al., 1993; Grindle and Thomas, 1991; Hartwell, 1994; McCleary, 1991). Those promoting the reform process in Ghana had already realized that the status quo was no longer tolerable, and had reached a point where the government began to develop a strong sense of its own agenda and a dislike for donor intrusion. Inequity in schooling in Ghana is a political issue, which means that it was not sufficient to simply demonstrate to the government that inequity existed and assume that the government, having the country's overall welfare as its goal, would respond to this information with reforming zeal. Nor could the amount of funds provided by PREP, which represented less than 4 percent of the MOE's annual budget, be considered a sufficient incentive for policy changes, especially when there was political resistance to those changes.

In Malawi, however, the technicians and bureaucrats looked to donors to initiate reform, due to their inability to act within the current political context. Gender equity was never an interest of the Government of Malawi, and the MOE initially stated that the fee waivers for girls would probably not be maintained once the GABLE program was over. Nevertheless, when the elections occurred in 1993, the government used the fee waivers for non-repeating girls as evidence of their support for women during the election campaign. They perceived it as "their " policy and advertised it as such. The actual content of specific policies, when they must be submitted to democratic processes, becomes very significant in terms of what is and is not considered to be a "good" policy in the eyes of the voters.

THE SPECIFIC REFORM WITHIN DONOR COMMUNITY AND HOST COUNTRY CONTEXTS

Both of these case studies analyzed attempts to address inequities in educational systems, but different types of inequities. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was great interest in extending schooling to disadvantaged groups, especially in the rural areas of countries. However, growing evidence that the expansion of the educational system alone was insufficient to increase equality of opportunity for rural residents led to, by the late 1970s, a shift in focus from simply increasing access to the type of education that should be offered in rural areas. The awk-

ward conclusions of this debate, i.e., that programs specially designed to be of maximum benefit for rural children were not what rural parents and children wanted, combined with the relatively restricted impact of increased access, weakened the enthusiasm for addressing rural inequity in education at the same moment that the more conservative agenda of the 1980s began to shift the focus in educational reform to issues of efficiency. In the 1990s, the focus of educational reform included little renewed interest in equity issues, with the exception of a new and powerful focus on girls' education as a means to achieve other social benefits such as reducing fertility rates.

If one adopts a critical theory approach, the distribution of power influencing the design and implementation of programs involves not only the various interests within the host country who may support or resist change, but also the power of the development agencies involved in pressuring for change. Rural/urban equity was not considered by the donor community as an essential ingredient of the reform in Ghana during the life of the PREP program. McCleary (1991) pointed out that performance on "key conditions," perceived by the donor as the most significant conditions among those included in a program, although their legal status is no different that the other conditions, is strikingly better than performance on all conditions. The Government of Ghana's awareness of USAID's priorities meant that there was a shared implicit understanding of what were the most and least significant aspects of the program, an understanding that further encouraged a lack of MOE commitment to the equity component of PREP.

Although the point has frequently been made that host country governments have their own agendas and various political pressures that they must consider when addressing policy reform, their perception of donor power is generally equated only with the amount of funds donors are able to allocate. Host-country governments are often well aware of the politics that influence donors and, consequently, what specific reforms are more likely to lead to future support. While rural/urban educational inequities might be a major problem in Ghana, solutions to that problem are not currently of high priority to the donor community. There may be many problems other than gender inequities facing the Malawi school system, but that problem has been given high priority among donors. The Government of Malawi's awareness of the attention being focused on gender equity in schooling by development agencies served to create support for the GABLE program reforms. In addition, addressing an issue upon which international attention has been focused creates prestige within the pan-African community. The chief of planning in Malawi had little interest in girls' education until he attended a meeting in Uganda where Malawi was praised for the GABLE program; he became, from that point on, committed to the importance of the issue.

The specific nature of the equity reform being proposed gained or lost power not only in terms of donor interest in and commitment to the particular issue, but also according to what sort of shift in power within the host country that the reform proposed. Because schooling is visibly controlled by the central government—more than agriculture, health, or other areas in which inequities determine people's access and achievement—equity in education is, perhaps, one of the most sensitive areas an African government addresses. The goals of the governments in both Ghana and Malawi were to stay in power and to create a stable climate for economic improvement of some kind. Grindle and Thomas (1992) have pointed out that "policy characteristics determine who experiences the cost and benefits of altered policies or institutions." The "who" was quite different in Ghana and Malawi, due to the nature of the type of equity reform being proposed. Some inequities are less politically dangerous than others. Throughout Africa, ethnic and regional inequities have been the bases for instability, the overthrow of governments, warfare, and slaughter. Gender inequities, on the other hand, cut across ethnic, regional, and class lines. Not only does a gender equity program not threaten class and ethnic status quos, but women and men with daughters exist at all levels of power.

In addition, removing fees that are seen as an obstacle by a large percentage of the population is always a popular act. Not only did Banda's party attempt to use the fee waivers granted to girls as an indication of their generosity and concern, but the party now governing Malawi ran on a campaign prom-

ise to remove all school fees, which it now has fulfilled. The popularity of fee waivers with the general public in Malawi made it a politically "easy" act. Supporting schooling in the disadvantaged rural northern regions of Ghana, on the other hand, was only popular with rural northern residents, a constituency that had little political power in Accra.

HOW THE REFORM WAS DESIGNED

Given the fact that in both countries the equity issue being addressed was not a part of the government's current agenda for reform, it is not surprising that neither government played a particularly active role in designing the programs. The Government of Malawi was not accustomed to taking an active role in deciding what reforms it wanted donors to support, but at the same time it was resistant to suggestions of reforms in areas that it did not want to address. In Malawi, an externally-imposed program was perhaps the only way to achieve any progress, because the type of dialogue among stakeholders that had been proposed for building a policy agenda was not possible at the time of GABLE's design. In Ghana, where political change had already begun to lead to the formation of a Ghanaian policy agenda, promoting the process of policy dialogue and developing host country advocates for change might have made more progress than externally imposed reform, even when the choice of specific activities involved in that reform was left up to the government.

The actual type of interventions that were decided upon during the design process had a great deal to do with the outcomes of the programs. Among various approaches to analyzing program design, Rondinelli's (1994) conceptualization of projects as "policy experiments" captures the flexible and interactive quality necessary in situations determined by unpredictable futures, as in the impact of timing within the political and policy processes just described. Although the series of pilot activities implemented under PREP in Ghana were envisioned in the original design of the program as being experimental approaches that would be selected through research to fit the Ghanaian context, they ended up being generic solutions implemented in a rigid manner. For the pilot studies to work in Ghana as they were proposed to work would have required enough lead time to do the required research into the causes of inequity and to locate the activities according to analytical rather than political priorities. If the end result was to be seen as a serious policy by the government to address inequities, then the process needed to involve the government and as many of the affected stakeholders as possible throughout the process. If possible solutions to equity problems were to be discovered from the pilot experiences, then the activities had to be monitored as learning experiences rather than presented as successes. If flexibility is as critical as research has suggested, then USAID needed to respond to the recommendations made during the second and third tranche reviews and the mid-term evaluation, i.e., that adjustments were needed in the management of the pilot activities. By proposing pilot studies and using conditionality that required only that a policy be developed, but not what policy, a level of experimentation, participation, and discourse was suggested. That level of involvement, however, could be circumvented when there was little commitment by either donor or government to addressing the issue.

On the surface, the condition requiring the elimination of fees for non-repeating girls by the Government of Malawi appears to be less flexible and interactive than the pilot studies and policy development sequence were in Ghana. The "experimental" nature of the fee waivers resided in: (1) whether or not the removal of the meager amount of school fees would encourage more girls to enroll in and stay in school, and (2) whether a critical mass of girls enrolling and persisting in school would alter the system's expectations about girls. The decision not to address the pregnancy policy through conditionality, but to support an advocate for change placed within the Malawian system, might also be considered an experimental approach to reform. Almost any attempt to reform policies might be looked upon as experimental if it is monitored and evaluated as a learning experience rather than as a solution that must be judged a success or failure, and if it is adaptive to the

events that unfold in a specific place and time frame.

The current interest in the education policy formation process and how to improve it often neglects the part of the process that involves the regional, district, and school-level personnel in the essential role of actually implementing new policy. This can be extremely important; research has pointed out that many educational policy reforms are not implemented at all, or, if they are implemented, lead to unintended and often unsatisfactory outcomes (Craig, 1990; Grindle and Thomas, 1991; Warwick, Reimers, and McGinn, 1992). Neither of the equity components of programs in Ghana and Malawi had any conditions requiring the implementation of policy changes. In Ghana, this was critical, as it meant that the government, which remained uncommitted to the reform, was able to meet the conditions requiring an equity improvement policy based on the pilot study without creating any actual change. In Malawi, the new pregnancy policy, in spite of being generated from within the society and having the support of a wide range of stakeholders, encountered obstacles to implementation at every level of the educational system, and those obstacles will only be overcome if the advocacy and mechanisms for reform that have been created are sufficient to persist. Some of the inattention to implementing policy reforms can be credited to the original modeling of NPA programs on budgetary issues, which generally involve only the central ministry of education in implementing policy changes defined by conditionalities. However, the evolution of the NPA approach into other policy areas (equity probably being the most politically sensitive of those) means that attention needs to extend beyond central ministry compliance with conditionalities to focus on solving implementation problems related to motivation and logistics.

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